

Strike it rich

Food, fun and charming stays in the Far North.

BY MARY DE RUYTER



1. Motuarohia (Robertson) Island. 2. Kaleo Designs shirt. 3. The Stone Store, Kerikeri Mission Station. 4. Chocolate making at Makana Confections. 5. Pompallier Mission and Printery. 6. Kemp House, Kororipo Heritage Park.

THE SIREN CALL of Northland grows stronger as warmer months arrive. And why wouldn't you want to visit the goldmine of nature, history and food that is the Far North? Less than 30 minutes apart, the Bay of Islands and Kerikeri combine timeless attractions with new accommodation and eating options.

Paihia remains a classic holiday destination, with beautiful islands, watersports and waterfront eateries. Waitangi Treaty Grounds offers engaging displays about early Māori-Pākehā interactions, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and beyond. Te Rau Aroha, honouring Māori who served New Zealand during wartime, is particularly moving.

Russell Kororāreka is quaint as a chocolate-box lid and perfect for promenading. Eating at the Duke of Marlborough Hotel is a fun mix of old and new, serving the likes of pāua risotto and hāngi pork belly among eclectic art and old-fashioned furniture.

A guided tour of Pompallier Mission and Printery is highly recommended. Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier and missionaries established the printery in 1841-42, and over eight years, they printed almost 40,000 books in Latin and te reo Māori. Seeing the involved process illustrates what a feat this was – plus, you can learn how to “coin a phrase” or be “a dab hand”.

At the Kororipo-Kerikeri Basin, Māori



chief Hongi Hika's Kororipo Pā looks over the buildings of Samuel Marsden's mission station. Kemp House (1822), New Zealand's oldest surviving building, doubled as a family home and a missionary school. It stayed in Kemp ownership until 1974, so its artefacts span many generations – knowledgeable guides highlight original books, furniture, Hika's tewhatewha (fighting staff), and teddy bears that little hands clutched long ago.

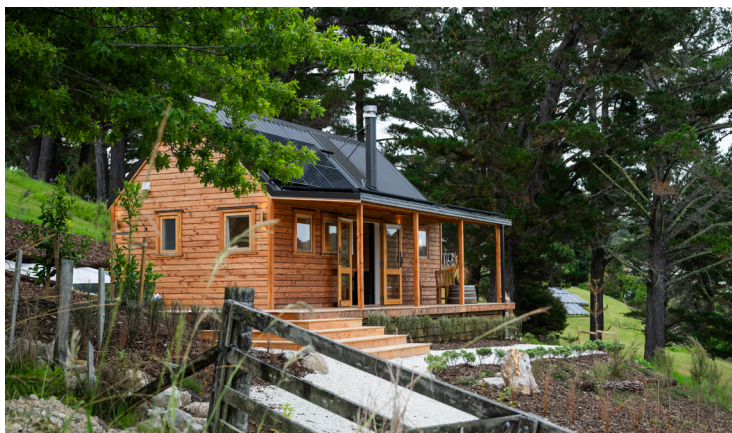
Next door, the Stone Store (1836) reflects its trading-post history by housing a beautifully curated gift shop. In the two levels above, some displays are particularly child-friendly, while others outline how much missionaries relied on the goodwill of their Māori benefactors.

Kerikeri has long been a home for creative types. At Kaleo Designs, Hawaiian woman Christine Makaweo uses “aloha attire” to showcase designs by local artists; the shirts, dresses, boardies and more are a riot of colour and pattern. Temptation rules at Makana Confections' boutique chocolate factory, from the free samples (more orange-chocolate snaps, please) to the sight of workers hand-making chocolates. The Little Black Gallery's art, jewellery, ceramics and other design goodies are equally covetable. And look out for the long lunches, workshops and tasting experiences of Savour Northland (October 1-31). northlandnz.co.nz



MĀKOHA PUREPOD

Some PurePods offer sweeping views of mountain ranges or sunsets over the sea; being in Northland's first PurePod feels like being hugged by native bush. Drive southwest from Kerikeri for 10 minutes, then walk an up-and-down bush track for 10 to 15 minutes to reach the solar-powered glass haven. It's thoughtfully kitted out – hot water bottles, telescope, local reference books – and you can carry in your own food or pre-order a hamper. There's no wifi or mobile reception, so surrender to the sound of birdsong and the rushing river, and watch the stars through the glass ceiling at night. Bliss. purepods.com



PAROA BAY WINERY AND ACCOMMODATION

The hygge factor is high at Paroa Bay Winery's latest accommodation. Overlooking the vines, two peaceful off-grid cabins are decked out in raw timber, cosy furnishings, wood-fire heating and luxuriously deep outdoor baths. Each cabin includes breakfast provisions, barbecue facilities and a bottle of Paroa Bay wine. Nearby, the winery's restaurant Sage is a must-visit for fresh, flavourful dishes with local and seasonal ingredients. Do trust the Trust the Chef menu: five courses of delights from sea and land, matched with delicious Paroa Bay wines. Dietary requirements are accommodated notably well.

thelindisgroup.com



THE PICNIC BOX BOI

Opening a box from The Picnic Box BOI is akin to unpacking a Christmas hamper from a kindly relative – so many lids to lift and treats to discover. Launched in November 2024, the three selections of high-quality food (picnic, platter and barbecue) are designed for sharing at the beach, bach

or park. The BBQ Box leads with the likes of crackers, caper- and garlic-marinated feta and olive antipasto. Next come T-bone steaks and posh sausages with salad, and a gooey chocolate brownie to finish. Get it delivered, or pick up a box in Paihia, Opua or Russell. Scrumptious.

thepicnicboxboi.co.nz

PHOTOGRAPHY NORTHLAND NZ, CHRISTINE MAKAWEO, MARK RUSSELL, LILIA ALEXANDER, MATT FINCH, SHAUN JEFFERS, JOSSIE GRITTEN